Chapter 20
BAM
バン
WORK TIME. OFF YOU GO.
THE OLD MADAM HERE SEEMS DETERMINED TO TURN ME INTO ONE OF HER COURTE-SANS.
VERDIGRIS
TA-DAAA
I CAN'T RECITE POETRY, PLAY THE ERHU, OR EVEN DANCE.
EVEN THOUGH I'M JUST THE DAUGHTER OF AN APOTHECARY WITH NO INTERESTS OUTSIDE OF MEDICINE...
...SHE'S MADE HER INTENTIONS CLEAR OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS.
SUMMONING A COURTESAN TO ONE'S ESTATE COSTS A GREAT DEAL IN ITSELF.
TONIGHT'S JOB IS OUTSIDE THE BROTHEL AT A NOBLE'S BANQUET.

JOKA
PAI-LING
MEI-MEI
THERE'S RICH, AND THEN THERE'S FILTHY RICH.
...TO SUMMON ALL THREE PRINCESSES OF VERDIGRIS AT ONCE, WHEN A SINGLE NIGHT OF DRINKING WITH JUST ONE OF THEM WOULD COST A WHOLE YEAR'S WORTH OF SILVER...
ON TOP OF THAT...
AT THE VERY LEAST, I'LL MAKE SURE NO ONE'S CUP RUNS DRY.
MY JOB IS TO ACT AS THEIR FOIL.
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Chapter 20 The Eunuch and the Courtesan

AS I SUSPECTED, TONIGHT'S HOST MUST BE OUTRA-GEOUSLY WEALTHY.
THE CALIBER OF THE FURNISHINGS ALONE ARE ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU DIZZY.
I'M SURE THEY WON'T MIND IF I TAKE A SOUVE—
GASP
NO, NO. CAN'T DO THAT.
YOU'LL BE IN THIS ROOM.
TA-DA

OOOH! ほう…
SINCE LI HAKU PROVIDED THE CONNECTION, I'M SURE IT'LL CHIP A BIT OFF MY DEBT.
GUESS I'LL GO GET THEM SOME DRINKS...
PROOL じゅる…
BUMP ドス
I HEARD THESE COURT DIGNITARIES WERE REFERRED TO US BY LI HAKU.
THEY'RE MUCH YOUNGER THAN I IMAGINED, THOUGH.
IF YOU HAVE SUCH RICH FRIENDS, WHY DIDN'T YOU REFER THEM TO US SOONER?
OKAY! TIME TO WORK.
SMILE にっ。
BUT...
...SINCE I RECEIVED FAR MORE THAN I WAS EXPECTING WHEN I LEFT THE INNER COURT...
...I CAN DODGE SELLING MYSELF FOR THE TIME BEING. THANK GOODNESS FOR THAT.

I KNOW IT'S PART OF THE JOB, BUT I'M GETTING REALLY TIRED OF HAVING TO SMILE CONSTANTLY.
GLOOM DOOM
どよどよ
OH?
DEJECTED
ずん…
IS THIS GUY BORED ...?
ALL THE OTHER LADIES ARE BUSY WITH THE OTHER MEN.
...OH WELL. GUESS THIS ONE'S UP TO ME.

PARD—
LEMME ALONE.
SSK
...I JUST WANT TO BE ALONE.
HUH?
WHY DOES THAT VOICE SOUND FAMILIAR?

SWISH
そっ
SIR JINSHI?
...IT'S YOU...

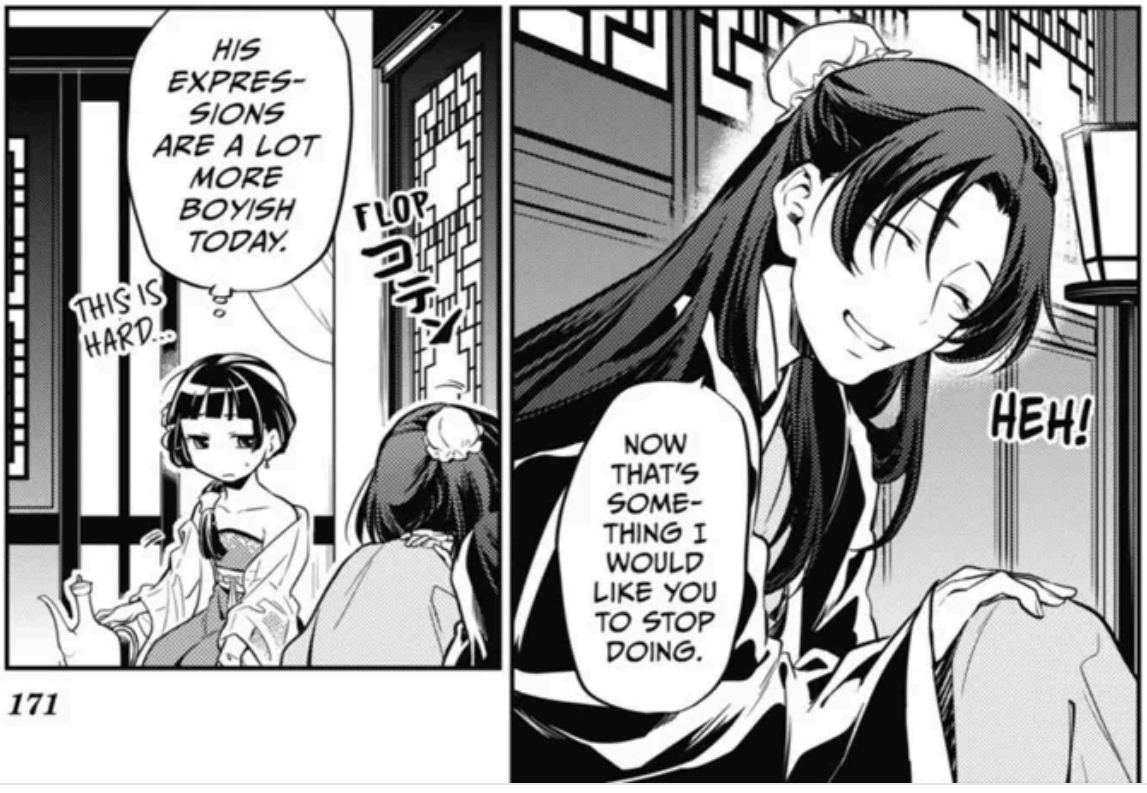
HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TOLD THAT MAKEUP MAKES YOU LOOK LIKE A DIFFERENT PERSON ALTO-GETHER?
...I GET THAT A LOT.

YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO TOUCH THE ENTER-TAINMENT.
WHY ARE YOU PULL-ING AWAY FROM ME?!
SNATCH
ひょいっ
THAT'S RIGHT.
THE BROTHEL, YOU MEAN?
I'M WORKING PART-TIME FOR THEM RIGHT NOW.
WHY IN THE WORLD ARE YOU WEARING THAT ANYWAY?
HMPH.
I SUPPOSE HE'S THE TYPE TO DOUBT A WOMAN'S VIRTUE.
... DON'T TELL ME...
.....!

I'M SAFE FOR NOW...
...BUT YOU NEVER KNOW, THE OLD HAG MIGHT JUST BRING SOMEONE IN FOR ME ONE OF THESE DAYS.
I'M NOT SEEING CLIENTS PRIVATELY OR ANY-THING.
...YET.
YET ...?
THEN WHY DON'T I BUY YOU?
HUH? PLEASE DON'T JOKE—
GASP

HMM.
...THAT ACTUALLY MIGHT NOT BE A BAD IDEA.
!!
SLUMP
I WOULDN'T MIND WORKING AT THE PALACE AGAIN.
HUH?
WHEN DID I EVER SAY THAT?
I THOUGHT YOU QUIT BECAUSE YOU HATED WORKING THERE?

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SENT ME AWAY EVEN AFTER I TRIED TO TELL YOU I WANTED TO KEEP WORKING THERE.
I KNOW IT'S NOT THE EASIEST PLACE TO WORK...
...BUT IT'S NOT LIKE YOU CAN BECOME A FOOD TASTER JUST BECAUSE YOU WANT TO.
THE ONLY THING I DIDN'T LIKE WAS BEING UNABLE TO EXPERIMENT WITH POISONS.


HIS EXPRES-SIONS ARE A LOT MORE BOYISH TODAY.
FLOP
ゴテン
THIS IS HARD...
NOW THAT'S SOME-THING I WOULD LIKE YOU TO STOP DOING.
HEH!

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HAS ANYONE EVER TOLD YOU THAT YOU'RE A WOMAN OF FEW WORDS?
.....I GET THAT A LOT TOO.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
AHH, THAT'S RIGHT.
THAT'S THE KIND OF PERSON YOU ARE.
TURN
SSK

C'MON, WHY DO YOU KEEP PULLING AWAY?
THEM'S THE RULES.
NOT EVEN A LITTLE BIT?
NO.
IT'S NOT LIKE IT'LL BE THE END OF THE WORLD OR ANYTHING.
OH MY!
YOU'LL SAP ME OF MY WILL TO LIVE, THOUGH.
HEE HEE!
JUST ONE HAND.
JUST THE FINGER-TIPS.
I FORGOT HOW CLINGY THIS GUY CAN BE.
SIIIGH
FINE. JUST YOUR FINGER-TIPS.
MM.

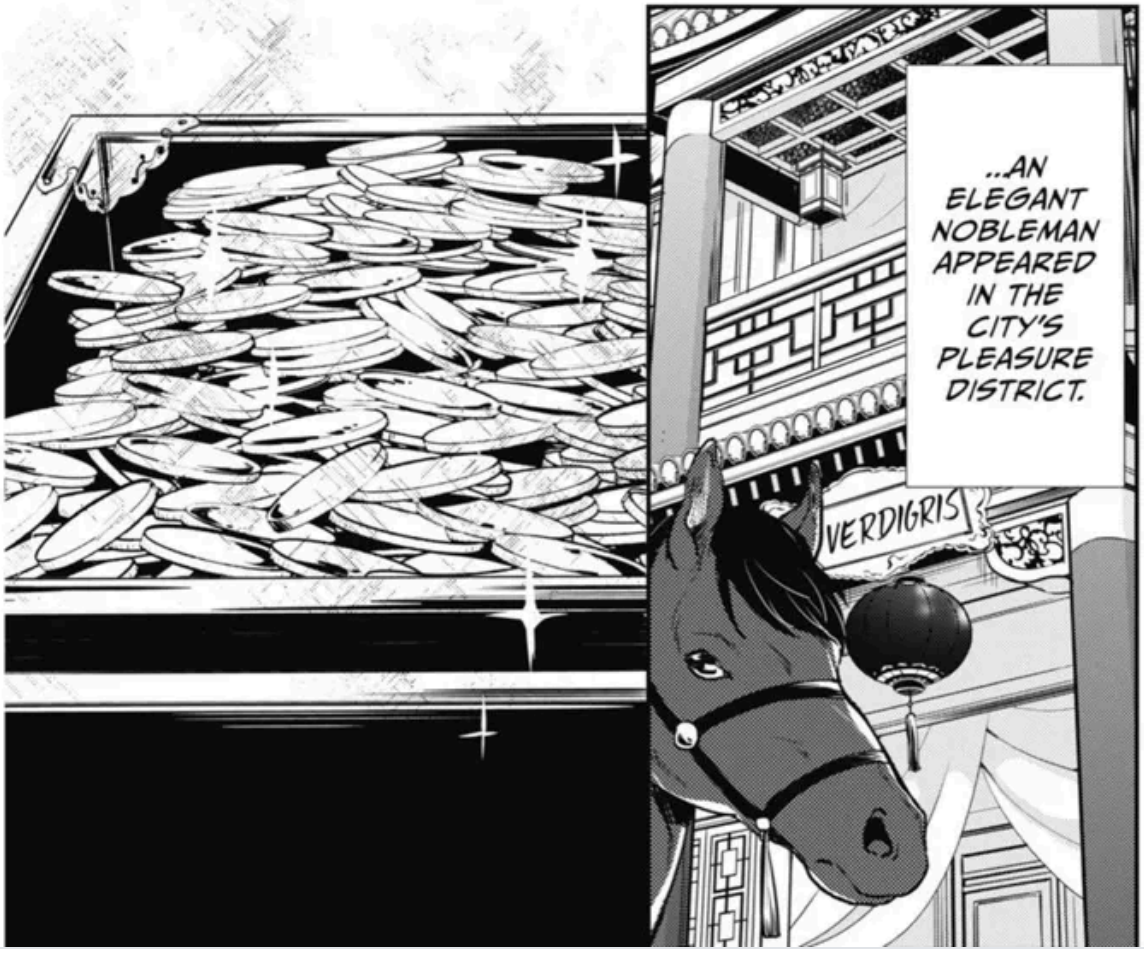
KISS

WHY, YOU ...!
GRIN
SHAKE
SHAKE
FWIP
IT'S CATCHING... BOTH THE LIP ROUGE AND THIS DAMNED FLUSH!
BLUSH
.....IT...

HEE HEE!
HEE HEE!
HEE HEE!
GAO SHUN'S HERE?!
OH.
HEE HEE HEE!
DID YOU SEE THAT?
HEY!
CUT IT OUT!
IT WAS ALL JUST A BLUR AFTER THAT, SO I DON'T REALLY REMEMBER MUCH.
WAIT, WHAT ?!
HUH?

...KEPT HOUNDING ME FOR ANSWERS.
WHO IS HE? HOW DO YOU KNOW HIM?
C'MON, TELL US!
ALL I REALLY REMEMBER IS THAT THE WOMEN I CONSIDER TO BE LIKE SISTERS...

A FEW DAYS LATER ...


...AN ELEGANT NOBLEMAN APPEARED IN THE CITY'S PLEASURE DISTRICT.
VERDIGRIS

HE HANDED OVER ENOUGH COIN TO BLIND EVEN THE VERDIGRIS MADAM...
...AND AN UNUSUAL PLANT THAT GREW FROM AN INSECT.

AND
HE HAD
EYES FOR
ONLY ONE
GIRL.